

The REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME II — No. 7

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

JULY, 1952

S.F.T.S.
LIBRARY

What Think Ye of the Christ?

ONE day, while the pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying: What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he? (Matthew 22:42).

Why ask it again? It would seem to be a question made pointless by an answer long since given. Our civilization has adopted Christ's name. It quotes him, builds temples in his honor, and pays homage to his genius. We ourselves give daily evidence of our respect for him. Why make further inquiry? Once, perhaps, when Jesus was making his initial appearance among men, Christ's question was pertinent. But now, after nineteen centuries have brought his name to every ear and the sublimity of his life and teaching to the recognition of all — what need is there now of asking the question? It is not idle?

It is not. Idle questions have a way of dying an early death. This question has resounded down the ages, and it will not die. To every generation of men and to every individual, members of the Christian church or not, it comes with a strange and inescapable importunateness. It comes to our generation now, and to each of us, and it comes with a most majestic compulsion. And our answer to it matters.

* * *

IT doesn't matter much what we think of Plato, Caesar, or Napoleon, nor of Luther, Calvin, or Knox. These were great men all, and they left their mark upon the world. We cannot,

therefore, be indifferent to their names. Yet, for all their eminence, they lie within the cosmic order. They can be escaped. We can, though always at a price, ignore them. Questions concerning their persons we can reduce to an academic level. We can, if we choose, hold our judgment in abeyance, or waive considerations altogether.

But that is precisely what we cannot do with Christ. Christ cannot be escaped. Though he may be rejected, he can never be ignored. That is the judgment Bethlehem has laid upon the world. In Bethlehem God came to men in Christ and men can as soon flee God as flee the Galilean. Neither, however, is possible. In God we live and move and have our being; in Christ our destiny is wrapped up. Into the fabric of our world Christ has been woven and in-

tegrated, and he is that world's central fact. Face him we must, and face him we do, for he is the great Unavoidable. And it isn't so much that we confront him, as that he inevitably confronts us, and always he asks the selfsame question with most majestic instance: What think ye of me? What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?

* * *

NOTE the real thrust of the question. We are not asked what we think about Christ's religion. We are not asked what we think of his habits of prayer, of his standards of conduct, of his modes of worship, or even of his character. It is, of course, not unimportant what we think of these. None of our attitudes to Christ are un-

IN THIS ISSUE

What Think Ye of the Christ?	Henry Stob	1
The Synod of 1952	George Stob	3
The "Problem" of the Nineteen Hundred Years	James Daane	6
Synod on Mission Problems	Harry R. Boer	8
Sectarianism in Harlem	Eugene S. Callender	9
Letters to the Journal		11
The Heart of the Matter	George Stob	14
The Art of the Novel and Christian Faith		16

What Think Ye of the Christ? — Continued

important. Yet the question here asked goes deeper. It brings us face to face with Christ himself. The question concerns his person. It appertains not so much to what he said and did — though these are not excluded — as to what he was and is. The question is not: What think you of Christ's words and deeds, but: What think you of his person, of his being?

Do not suppose that the distinction here made is faint and meaningless. It is a real vital distinction. The battle for the purity of the gospel has been waging on this front for many generations now. One hears it frequently said that we ought to have the religion of Christ and be done with the religion about Christ. Christianity, we are told, is not a doctrine about a person, but a way of life. It is an attitude and a spirit, not a belief in metaphysical substances. Why, it is asked, do we keep on obscuring the simple teachings of Jesus by the introduction of personalities and engagement with philosophical speculations? Jesus was a man such as we — purer and lovelier to be sure — but in no essential way different from us. Only one thing he demands of us: Not to have a theory of his person, but: To share his spirit, to be good as he was good, to serve his God, and like him, to help our fellow men. In short, to share his religion, and not to make a religion of him.

This sort of talk flies in the face of Scripture. It is not the Gospel. The Gospel always lays the emphasis on Christ's own person. It always demands an estimate of his being. What, it asks, do you think of him? And then, as if still more to clarify the question, and in that way to lead us evermore away from vague and general attitudes to precise and definite formulations of our faith, it adds: Whose son is he?

* * *

THAT is the question each of us is called to answer. It is the central question in Christianity. It is the great and cosmic question. It is that because it appertains to that which in Christ is highest and most significant — his real divinity, that quality in his person which constituted him the eternal son of God. It is this eternal sonship which distinguishes him from every creature, and it is this which raises him to a dignity and power inapproachable by man and in essence foreign to him.

Were Jesus in essence like one of us there would be no point in putting the question he asks. We have come, and rightly so, to regard a man's birth-record as an unimportant index to his worth. Not who a man's parents are, but what he himself is, is decisive for our opinion of him. We expect a man to stand on his own feet and not on those of his ancestors. Blue blood is measured by character and achievement, not by pedigrees and family ties.

And yet, in this instance, the question of sonship is both pointed and important. None other than Christ himself asks it. Why? Was it because he thought so much of his genetic bond? This was not the reason. He was not one to overemphasize the family relation who could say: Whosoever is unwilling to forsake father and mother, wife and children to follow me, is not worthy of me. The reason he puts the question lies in his desire to elicit from men the admission of that unique sonship which by this very query he would teach them to recognize.

For Jesus knew who he was. He knew himself to be born of God, to be not a product of this world but an incursion from another, one who dwelt in the beginning with God, the very effulgence of his glory, by the word of whose mouth the heavens were made. It is this that he was concerned to have men see and acknowledge. It is this that was the burden of his message, and it is this which, with the cross, is the skandalon of the gospel.

What we have here to do with is no common thing. It is wondrous, capable only of being believed. That is why it was a stumbling block to Israel and foolishness to Greece. It means that in Jesus of Nazareth, who lived 1900 years ago as a member of a despised race in a corner of the world, a man who never passed the boundaries of his native land, who never wrote a word save once (with his finger, in the sand), who died as a criminal an ignominious death, who owned but a handful of disciples and these hesitating, vacillating, and inconstant — that in him God dwelt palpably with men.

* * *

IT is this, that in Jesus we have God, in Christ the eternal Father, that is this lost world's hope and our only benediction.

The REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME II

JULY, 1952

NO.

*A Periodical of Reformed Comment
and Opinion*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rev. Harry R. Boer, Dr. James Daane,
Rev. George Stob, Dr. Henry Stob,
Dr. Henry Zylstra

Published each month by the
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Subscription price: \$2.00 per year
Entered as Second Class Matter at the Post
office at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Address all subscriptions and communica-
tions to:

THE REFORMED JOURNAL
255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E.
Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

Men have always sought to find God out. Some went to nature, but they couldn't find him there. Next to every blade of fragrant grass they found a briar and a thistle, by every rose a thorn.

Some sought to reach God through the avenue of history, to climb step by step on the stair of events to the throne of heaven. But the stair proved a trial to wind into a labyrinth with no Ariadne-cord to lead one out. For this is true: God is not met by climbing. God meets by bowing.

Others sought by mystic contemplation to find the Lord within their breasts, but there too he was not found. Sin they found if they were honest and weakness and hate and darkness but not God. God is not to be contacted with any celestial sparks that may be left flickering in the human soul. That soul may cry and long and want, but it does not in and by itself possess.

If we are to have God — and in him peace and hope and love — then God must come to us. We cannot come to God. Between him and us is a great gulf fixed that can be bridged only from the other side. We cannot, as we were, discover God, ferret him out

cate him, or take him unawares. He is not a datum that lies within the range of human possibility. He is not a Thing or Object that we can approach, investigate, and seize. God is a Person, and a Subject, and if any ending is to take place he alone must do it. Our knowledge and possession of him is dependent on one indispen-

sable condition: that he stoop down to us and speak.

That he has done in Christ. Christ is God in redemptive movement toward and among the children of men. In Christ men have a God not locked in the inaccessible spaces of heaven or fixed in the timelessness of eternity, but a God who, while remaining God,

moves beneficently through the earth with scarred hands outstretched crying "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Christ stands before you now, and me. What think you of this man, with visage all marred? Whose son is he?

—HENRY STOB

The Synod of 1952

By GEORGE STOB

THE major action of the Synod of 1952 of the Christian Reformed Church was the almost complete reconstitution of the Calvin Seminary Faculty.

The official report concerning it will appear in our official church papers.

We commend our School and her new faculty to the blessing and gracious governance of the Lord of the Church, and to the confidence and loving support and earnest prayers of all our people. And we beseech the Lord of the Church to give us years fruitful with a theological development that comes from earnest inquiry into and complete submission to His Word, and a competent and consecrated ministry through which our Church may grow strong and be enabled to fulfill the whole of her urgent calling in our world.

* * *

There were, of course, many other matters that claimed the attention of Synod.

It is of special interest to note that large provisions were made for the expanding missionary endeavor of our Church. And it is particularly gratifying to note that the Lord has given us a relatively large number of missionaries — for the prosecution of missionary work in such strategic areas as India, Ceylon, Japan, and Nigeria — among whom are no less than five members of the class which just graduated from Calvin Seminary, while several others of the same class are offering themselves for work in Canada and for Home Missions in our own country.

Another item of consequence was the approval by Synod of a \$2,000,000 expansion campaign for highly needed buildings for Calvin College. In a large sense this was a vote of confidence in Calvin's new President, Dr. William

Spoelhof, who by his decisiveness and fine tact, as well as by his evident consecration to the ideals of Calvin, has won high respect throughout the Church. All of us, of course, will rally strong behind this expansion campaign, and with the loyalty and faith that lives in terms of long years, help it along to a more than successful conclusion.

Of more than passing note is the retirement of one of the Church's servants in the field of missions — Mr. Jacob H. Bosscher. Mr. Bosscher has given nearly the whole of his life, and certainly the whole of his heart, to service on our Indian field. He retires now from his position as Business Manager for the Indian field, and we trust that he enters upon his well-earned rest with the hearty thanks of the Church he has served with long faithfulness. Mr. John T. Ebberts of Artesia, California, has been appointed to succeed him.

* * *

For the rest, I should like to review Synod's actions with reference to some of the major problems by which it was confronted.

There may be some who will suppose that Synod was rather indecisive on some of the major issues. That is not quite the case. It is not necessarily acting with decision when a body takes not-adequately-considered action on a given matter. Sometimes it is best to decide to consider more carefully and study more thoroughly. On that score, the Synod of 1952 was for the most part wisely decisive.

Particular Synods

THERE have been some reports current to the effect that there was a large "ground swell" throughout the

Church in favor of the organization of Particular Synods. If so, the Synod of 1952 rose above it and chose to give more time for consideration before entering upon a so major change.

Synod adopted the advice of its Advisory Committee, which was as follows:

Although your committee foresees the possibility that the Christian Reformed Church may desire to move in the direction of Particular Synods eventually, our judgment is that the Church is not yet ripe for immediate decision on this matter. We recommend therefore that the Particular Synod Report be referred to the Church for study.
Grounds:

a. *The radical departure from our existing system involved in such reorganization demands that we move cautiously.*

b. *Insufficient opportunity has been given to the Classes, Consistories, Boards, and the Press to consider the matter.*

c. *There is already a request for postponement in Agenda Report 32 of the Mission Realignment Committee, viz., "we request Synod to hold in abeyance its judgment re the specific problem of mission realignment (in the report of the Committee on Particular Synods) until our committee reports in 1953."*

The Committee on Particular Synods was continued with the mandate to promote discussion in our Church press, solicit the judgments of our various Church bodies and agencies, and offer its recommendations to the Synod of 1954.

The Synod of 1952 — Continued

These decisions will no doubt meet with general approval. There was no urgency which required haste. And before moving toward a major reorganization of our Church-structure, the Church will surely want to consider how Particular Synods will affect the administration of Church denominational programs, what influence they will have on the course of our future history, whether or not they will tend to promote sectionalism and thus weaken the homogeneity and unity of denominational life, and whether they will simplify or rather complicate the functioning of our major ecclesiastical assemblies.

The Divorce Problem

IN its decisions on the membership status of those divorced and subsequently remarried, the Synod of 1952 not only failed to move forward, but turned back to the position which prevailed prior to 1947.

The position of 1947 required that persons divorced by reason of their own adultery and afterwards remarried, or persons divorced on unbiblical grounds and afterwards remarried, could be members only by returning to the first partner, if possible, or by ceasing to live with the second partner. Now the Synod of 1952 has dropped 1947's demand to "return to the former marriage partner, if this be possible." It is still required, however, that one must leave the second marriage partner in order to obtain membership in the Church — a position that dates back to 1858.

This means that those once divorced and remarried, even though sincerely repenting of those sins, cannot be members of the Christian Reformed Church unless they are willing to forsake their present marriage partners and children. Thus, the Church still demands what Mr. Peter L. Van Dyken has called "the penance of an unlawful sacrifice" (Cf. Agenda 1952, p. 10).

Still another part of the position of 1947 has been dropped. The Synod of 1947 had made an exception for those divorced and remarried "while living in the state of complete ignorance." These persons, though having sinned in divorce and remarriage, were not required to leave the second marriage

partner in order to obtain membership in the Church. The Synod of 1952 rescinded this part of the 1947 position.

This means that the double standard which the Synod of 1947 had set up has been removed. Those who sinned "in ignorance" will be measured, as is proper, by the same measure that applies to those who sinned "in the light." There is, after all, only one law of God for all men.

* * *

It is apparent that Synod's concern to retain the "historic position" was based on a two-fold assumption.

1. In proposing the retaining of the "historic position," the Advisory Committee explained that the adoption of the advice of the Majority Study Committee (to wholly rescind 1947 - S) "would leave our Church without a definite stand on the membership of remarried unbiblically divorced persons."

The assumption is that the Church must of necessity adopt an *explicit rule* which is to govern alike *every case* of persons who sin in divorce and remarriage. But that is a highly debatable matter. It is the conviction of many — among them many of the most notable scholars in our Reformed tradition — that the Scripture sets forth no explicit rule which is to govern in every such instance, but leaves it to the Spirit-governed judgment of the Church to determine in each instance, by the power of the keys, when the repentant sinner has given such evidence of repentance as would warrant receiving into the fellowship of Christ's Church. But the Synod of 1952 was fearful of leaving such decisions to the judgment of the local consistory for even a year or two, and chose to retain the blanket rule of the "historic position" to govern the action of every consistory.

2. The second assumption underlying the decision of the Synod of 1952, is the old assumption that a second marriage after unbiblical divorce is "a living in continuous adultery." The whole of the Study Committee reporting in 1951 regards this a *thesis* not adequately proved. The Synod of 1952 likewise

acknowledges that this has not yet been adequately proved. Many Synodical delegates expressed the same judgment and some even added that it cannot be proved. Nevertheless, Synod proceeded to reaffirm the "historic stand." It is a bit unfortunate that a position so positively held should rest on what is widely acknowledged to be an as yet unproved assumption.

Synod's further decisions on this matter reflected this uncertainty. For it was also decided to appoint a Study Committee "to examine the *thesis* (in italics - S) that a marriage after unbiblical divorce is a living in continuous adultery," and provisions are added that if the study requires it, the present stand on the membership of those divorced and remarried shall be either revised or wholly replaced. It might seem proper that the "exegetical foundation" should be sought and established, *before the position on which its presumed discovery is based has been adopted.*

As it is now, the Synodical "stand" is admittedly very unsteady. The Church is asked to follow a rule whose foundation in the Word of God is yet to be examined by a Study Committee. Meanwhile, the Church is informed that the study may possibly require revision or replacement of the Synodical "stand." This leaves the whole Church, concerned as it should be to live by the Word of God, in greater uncertainty than ever before.

In any event, we cannot go too far wrong as long as we are still concerned to search the Scriptures and evaluate our position in terms of the teaching of the Word of God. The Study Committee appointed for the study above referred to is composed of: R. William Kok, Dr. John Kromminga, Rev. John Vander Ploeg, Rev. B. Haan, Rev. Henry Erffmeyer, and Rev. Fred Van Houten.

Synodical "Labor Policy"

THERE were several overtures asking Synod to adopt an "open-shop" labor policy in the awarding of denominational building contracts, so as to "guarantee the privileges and rights of those fellow-christians who have conscientious convictions against affiliations with so-called neutral labor organizations."

There was a good deal more involved than the simple adoption of a private policy for the awarding of building contracts. The overtures ventured to a problem of large and complex proportions, involving important questions of ecclesiastical polity, and the whole question of the Christian's place and duty in the economic organization of our present society.

The Advisory Committee offered to synod a Minority and Majority recommendation.

The Minority, elder Cornelius Van Valkenburg, a Grand Rapids attorney, offered the following recommendation:

That Synod make no stipulations for inclusion in requests for bids, or the acceptance of same, on the construction of denominational buildings, relative to the matters of closed shop, open shop, union shop, and similar provisions relating to labor organization membership.
Grounds:

1. Synod has expressed itself by retaining from granting requests to stipulate.

In 1950 Synod was presented with two overtures ... asking that Synod adhere to "the principle of the open-shop in the letting of contracts on college and Seminary buildings, and on church-controlled buildings." At that time it said (Acts 1950, p. 28): "Synod decided that in awarding future contracts for the construction of buildings the Board of Trustees and all other denominational boards, shall exert themselves to the utmost to safeguard the rights of those whose conscientious objections prevent them from affiliating with the so-called neutral labor organizations."

The same Synod said also that "it expressed its confidence in the Board of trustees by declaring that no specific synodical ruling was violated by the action (letting the contract to a neutral labor organization contractor) the board has taken."

2. Synod has entrusted the Board of trustees with the whole task of a conscientious administration of the College and Seminary (which includes the building program).

a. The Board stands as individuals required to exercise the principles of stewardship and witness to the Christian community not only, but to all men.

b. *It ought not to be hampered in any way to carry out the task which involves dealings with economic organizations. The interplay of religious, economic, and legal principles demand this.*

3. Synod, as representing the Church, ought not to legislate a specific rule touching on one point of our ever-varying pattern of economic life.

a. Principles of Scripture are not limited to a specific form of economic life, but cover all manifestations of the same throughout history.

b. The competitive system, as it has evolved, has collective bargaining, for both management and labor, as its logical end. Both Christian and so-called neutral labor organizations agree to this by striving to be the bargaining units, and thereby are known as economic organizations.

c. The union shop seeks to achieve a 100% realization of the goal, and once a bargaining unit has been sanctioned the employer desires to deal with all employees through the same.

d. The open-shop leaves the employer without the right to deal with his employees. He can deal only with the bargaining unit. The unaffiliated employee (who is not in the bargaining-unit) has a job but he is throttled by the bargaining unit (whether Christian or neutral) from ever effectually speaking about his working conditions. Even the open-shop suppresses the unaffiliated employee from speaking his mind as his conscience dictates. From this very important angle the open shop is no better nor worse than the closed shop. If we are looking for full freedom to work then all collective bargaining will have to be abandoned. The ideal is 100% in the bargaining-unit once you accept the premise of collective bargaining.

4. The Christian is in the world and he must show to the world how his Christian principles can overcome the unrighteousness of the world.

The Christian cement mason does not lay sidewalks only for Christians. We are not so limited in our dealings. Each individual is faced with his peculiar problems of how to work the work of righteousness in his own life.

One of the elder delegates proposed as an additional ground for this Minority position Article 30 of the Church Order, which stipulates: "In these assemblies (Consistory, Classis, Synod - S) ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner."

Synod was not ready, however, to adopt this recommendation, and quite understandably tabled it in order to take up the Majority recommendation.

The Majority of the Advisory Committee recommended:

That a Committee be appointed to give careful study to, and to make recommendations concerning the labor policy problem which the Church has encountered in the awarding of contracts for denominational building projects.
Grounds:

a) No less than five overtures concerning this problem have been addressed to this Synod alone.

b) Decisions of former Synods anent this problem have not proved to be an adequate solution.

c) Conflicting opinions among us on this matter point up the need for careful study of the problem....

d) Everything possible should be done to resolve the difficulties associated with this problem, and to safeguard our Christian unity which is endangered by it.

This Majority advice was adopted, and a Study Committee was appointed by Synod with the following as members: Rev. P. Holwerda, Mr. Cornelius Van Valkenburg, Mr. Joseph Gritter, Dr. Henry Ryskamp, Rev. William Van Rees.

This problem is already in open discussion (as all our problems ought to be), as will appear from several letters to this issue of the *Journal*, and as appears from an editorial on the subject in the July issue of the *Christian Labor Herald* by Mr. Joseph Gritter, Secretary of the Christian Labor Association. There is some comment on these in another article in this issue of the *Journal*.

The "Problem" of the Nineteen Hundred Years

By JAMES DAAN

IT is remarkable that although the New Testament writers did not know the date of the second coming of Christ, and knew in fact that it was unknowable, they nevertheless declared that the end was near.

Not knowing the date, how could they know it was near? This problem is sometimes dismissed with the remark that although Paul did not know the precise date of the end, he expected it would come very soon, very likely within his own lifetime. For this solution, however, there is no biblical evidence. Paul never set dates for the return of Christ — not even approximate dates. Had he done so, he would have been mistaken in his "approximate date," and he would, moreover, have been mistaken as to the *ground* on which the New Testament declares the end to be near.

Nor is there biblical evidence for the view that Paul expected Christ to come any day. He did not believe in an "any moment return." To the Thesalonians who thought the return of Christ so imminent that they were warranted in quitting their work the injunction came to go back to work. The reason given by Paul was that certain events, such as the coming of the "man of sin," must occur first before the end *could* come. Since these events did not occur during Paul's lifetime, during none of his days could Paul sing, "Is it the crowning day?"

Now is there any biblical evidence to support the view that Paul knew the end was at least 1900 years away? Paul set no dates of any kind. For us, however, the 1900 years are a fact. And this fact projects itself into our thinking whenever we seek to understand the New Testament teaching of the nearness of the end and of the second coming of Christ. Precisely at this point great caution must be exercised.

For us the 1900 years are indeed a fact, one which we cannot completely ignore. Yet we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that the 1900 years raises a *peculiar problem for us*. And above all we must not allow the 1900 years to destroy or weaken the New Testament teaching of "nearness." When the 1900 years becomes a pecu-

liar problem *for us*, then the problem itself is an indication that we have taken the wrong approach.

On this wrong approach Paul would have faced the same problem. This becomes clear if we consider the following: Paul did not believe in the any-moment-return of Christ. On the contrary, he believed that certain future events had to take place before the return of Christ and the end of the world could possibly occur. How then could he feel prior to the occurrence of these events that the end was near and the Lord at hand?

To put the matter concretely, how could Paul enjoin upon some of the members of the Corinthian Church the exhortation not to marry or remarry, and how could he say to the already married "that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none" (I Cor. 7:29)? It is not sufficient to say that Paul merely had his eye on the stress of the times. To be sure he did have his eye on the stress of the times and desired to spare the Corinthians (I Cor. 7:26, 28). But it must not be overlooked that this stress of the times is related in the mind of Paul to eschatological considerations. The "tribulation" (7:28) and "cares" (7:32) of marriage are by Paul related to the fact that "the time is shortened" (7:29) and to the "for the fashion of this world passes away" (7:32). Paul here sets forth the bold teaching that for some people marriage is "out of date" and "out of fashion" because of eschatological considerations of the end. And he makes the same bold assertion concerning "weeping." "Those that weep," "must weep as though they wept not" (7:30).

Stated concretely then the question is: How could Paul 1900 years ago assert that for some people marriage was out of date because the end was near, and out of fashion because the fashion of this world passeth away? How could Paul insist 1900 years ago that Christian ethics and conduct should be so radically qualified by eschatological considerations of the nearness of the end? On what basis could Paul insist that Christian conduct should be so profoundly qualified *prior* to the oc-

currence of such events as the coming of the man of sin, which is to say prior to the possibility of Christ's return, *the nearness of an end that could not possibly take place until later?*

In view of these considerations becomes plain that the 1900 years cannot constitute a *peculiar problem for us*. When it does, our "peculiar problem" is itself an indication that we have taken a wrong approach to the New Testament teaching of the nearness of the end. *For on this wrong approach* 19 or 91 years would create the same problem for Paul.

It is also plain that the above questions cannot be answered by asserting that Paul could enjoin refraining from marriage because he expected the "man of sin" to emerge soon and, therefore, thought the end was near. To those of us who believe in an inspired Scripture such an answer is unacceptable because it makes Paul mistaken on biblical counts.

The Problem Defined

TAKING our stance then in the conviction that Paul was not in error, how shall we explain that Paul was right in his day in insisting that the end was near, when in fact 1900 years have already passed and the end is many years yet? This is our problem.

The first step toward the solution of our problem is the double recognition that it is *our* problem, and that Paul himself had no such problem. There is no biblical evidence whatever even suggesting that Paul sensed any problems or difficulties when he held before the Corinthians ethical demands that were conditioned by the nearness of the end.

The second step in the solution of our problem is the recognition that had Paul approached the "nearness of the end" in the manner in which we ordinarily approach it, he would have faced the same problem — for as has been indicated above, on a wrong approach 19 or 91 years will create the same problem as the 1900 years has for us. This recognition will involve the admission that *our* problem is one of our own creation, and results from a wrong

approach to the New Testament idea of the nearness of the end, and therefore to its idea of the end itself.

The Suggested Solution

So far at least as my reading and knowledge goes, this "problem" has not been adequately solved. Solutions which turn on the use of "physical death," and the "foreshortening of prophetic perspective," etc., are, as was shown in the preceding article, unsatisfactory. They are offered more to protect the biblical writers from error, than with the conviction that they solve the problem.

The thesis of this series of articles has been the contention that the usual, traditional way of understanding the end and its nearness has too consistently ignored that New Testament teaching that the end and its nearness must be defined first of all with reference to the Cross. It has been contended that New Testament eschatology is grounded in the Cross and that therefore all New Testament eschatological teaching has reference first of all to the Cross, and then secondly, and in the light of this Cross-reference, to the last calendar date. When the New Testament thinks of the end and the nearness of the end, it first looks backward to the Cross and then forward into the future. It thinks of the final end in terms of the finality of the Cross.

On this interpretation of the end and its nearness, and it would seem only on this interpretation, will we find it possible to do justice, and to fruitfully relate our theological thinking to such items of New Testament teaching as: [1] Christ was crucified at the "end of the ages" (Heb. 9:26, I Peter 1:20); [2] the New Testament church had come under the ends of the ages (I Cor. 10:11) and her time was the "last hour" (I John 2:18); [3] that the end is near for "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5); [4] that men ought always to watch regardless of the number of years that separate the first from the second coming (Matt. 25:13), that Christian Ethics must be eschatologically qualified and conditioned even during those days which precede the occurrence of such events as the coming of the man of sin, during which the coming of Christ cannot take place (I Thess. 2:3); [5] that there are present, *throughout the whole New Testament dispensation*, signs indicating the nearness of the end (Matt. 24). It seems

at least to this writer, that it is impossible to fruitfully relate these and other items of New Testament eschatological teaching except on the basis proposed in this series of articles.

The Suggested Solution Contrasted With Dialectical Eschatology

It would indeed be theologically naive to claim that the proposition: The final end and its nearness must be understood in terms of the finality of the Cross, is a succumbing to a Barthian, dialectical type of eschatology. If this were what Barth is teaching in his eschatology, I too would say, "Well roared Lion"!

Since the collapse of the "social gospel" with its characteristic belief that the Kingdom of God was automatically realizing itself in the social-historical processes, under the impact of two world wars, an economic depression, and the rise of the threat of communism, there has been a vigorous renewal of the study of eschatology, especially among the dialectical theologians. Dialectical theology represents an extreme swing of the pendulum. Whereas the theologians of the social gospel optimistically believed the Kingdom of God was in the world and was smoothly realizing itself in unbroken progress, dialectical eschatology places the Kingdom of God outside history. Its mood is more pessimistic. It believes that the Cross and Resurrection are indeed eschatological events, but it maintains that these events do not take place within history, but on the *edge* of history. Since they do not take place within that ordinary history that occurs within time and space but on the edge of ordinary historical time and space, these events are not once-for-all events. *They are regarded as always taking place.* Barth once said that the Resurrection is the Second Coming! And since they take place all the time, there is no sequence in their eventuation. Since they take place in no sequence, none of them possesses finality. The Cross does not possess finality over the Fall nor over the whole temporal-historical process of sin. The Cross *points to* the Lordship of Christ over sinful history but *does not constitute* that Lordship.

The Resurrection is defined in a similar manner. Although Barth himself declares belief in the reality of the physical resurrection of Christ, for him as well as for many other dialectical theo-

logians the real event of the resurrection takes place on the edge of history outside ordinary time. *Thus there is no real core of realized eschatology within history* according to the dialectical theologians.

This understanding of the objective facts of redemption means that in the subjective realization of redemption within the individual Christian, the individual Christian cannot be identified as "saint," as "child of God." He is always *just as really* a sinner as a saint; elect as well as reprobate. No eschatological reality is ever real within this world. The Kingdom of God, the possession of justification and the assurance of faith is always just beyond his grasp, on the edge of history. Sin and grace, justification and damnation, election and reprobation are always equally real within history and evenly balanced. Within history, the one is as real as the other. In the main, such is the view of Barth, Brunner, R. Niebuhr, H. R. Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and others.

In the view that I have presented the Cross is a real event within ordinary history and therefore constitutes the absolutely decisive division of the temporal-historical process. And it is precisely because the Cross is a real actualization of the real eschatological end within history that the Resurrection is a real actualization of the eschatological Kingdom of God within history. Its complete actualization awaits the second coming, but it is already essentially present in the core of eschatology realized at the first coming. With this realized core of eschatology within history it becomes possible — and possible only on this basis — to assert that the individual Christian is a real saint in a sense in which he is not a sinner — Paul said, I sin, yet not I, but sin that dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17, 20), thereby identifying himself as an essential saint but not as an essential sinner. Sin is the "body of this death," but Paul is the new man in Christ. — And on this same basis of the realized eschatology of the Cross and Resurrection it becomes possible to hold to the possibility of good works, the assurance of faith¹ and justification, and to the essential reality of that whole complex of realities known as the Kingdom of God.

1. On the view here presented, faith *itself* is the *solid substance* of things hoped for, real evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).

The Problem of the 1900 Years — Continued

It is precisely because of the crucial importance of recognizing this core of realized eschatology in the Cross and Resurrection, both as a protection against the distortion of eschatology by the dialectical theologians, and as the only fruitful point of departure for an advance in Reformed eschatological thinking, that it was urged in this whole series of articles that more serious consideration must be given to the realized eschatology of the first coming of Christ, and that we cannot safely continue to restrict eschatology both as to its contents and limits to the second coming, as traditional eschatology has done almost exclusively.

Not only all consideration about the end of the world, its nearness, and its

attendant event of the return of Christ, but all the eschatological features of Christian doctrine must be related, if these features are to be understood, to the Cross as the End because it is an event that need not be repeated, and to the Resurrection as the Endless because it is a real beginning within history of something that is eternal because it cannot again be invaded by sin.

* * *

In this series, in which one more article is to follow, I have concerned myself exclusively with New Testament eschatology. The Old Testament to be sure is also heavily eschatological, but it has been left untouched because even a partial discussion of it would have

demanding the space which only a book permits.

* * *

BIBLICAL eschatology is indeed a very difficult and complex matter. Some of the analyses and emphases presented in this series may indeed require further refinement, but the principal thesis would seem to be not merely in harmony with, but an expression of the basic teaching of the New Testament itself. It is at any rate my hope that this idea of eschatology and the eschatological method demanded by it, will receive further evaluation and explorations by others. For the subject of eschatology both as it relates to its current theological development, and as it relates to the nature of our times, is a subject of large importance. Reformed theology's eschatological vacuum will be filled by others, if not by itself.

Synod on Mission Problems

By HARRY R. BOER

THE Synod of 1952 adopted "in spirit and general content" two of the three parts of the Mission Policy Study Committee Report on mission principles. These two parts deal with Evangelism and Medical work. Action on that part of the report which dealt with Education, and which consisted of majority and minority reports, was postponed until next year.

Of the two parts that were adopted the more significant is the report on Evangelism. It commits the Church to what is generally called the indigenous method of mission work. It lays the foundation for a missionary method which is calculated to bring into being fully independent churches at the earliest opportunity. This may help us to escape the besetting temptation of all mission endeavor — paternalism — and bring all our mission activity closer to the New Testament pattern.

The adoption of the report on Medical work is also significant, especially when seen in conjunction with the report on Evangelism. The two together are calculated to help us overcome another inveterate missionary temptation — institutionalism. The impact of the whole is to draw our mission work away from finding virtue in buildings and large institutional endeavor and to

emphasize the immediate task of transmitting the Gospel. Institutional work is not excluded by the adoption of the findings of the committee, but its scope is definitely limited.

It is safe to say that, whichever report on education comes later to be accepted, our educational missions will in the future fall under the general impress of the two reports. Both as to method and scope the adopted positions of the report contain implications that cannot but place strictures on the kind of educational expansion that has characterized so much of mission work. All these are gains which recent mission history shows to be of value. In a world of political and economic revolution, it is the part of wisdom always to have the missionary house in such order that when the time comes for the missionary church to withdraw, the young church will be able to take over.

* * *

BY evangelism the report understands "that activity of the Church which concerns itself with the missionary proclamation of the Gospel and the consequent founding of churches." Preaching and teaching are the means by which this proclamation is effected. These are "official activities of the

Church and therefore are to be understood in their narrow and limited sense." So long as the thoughts here expressed are taken seriously by the missionary community, it will be very difficult for that conception of missions to take hold among us which regards activities like education, rural reconstruction, medical work, recreation, socio-economic counselling, or the like, as forms of preaching. The report distinguishes sharply between the preaching of the Gospel and the several Christian activities that result from its acceptance.

The failure to make this distinction has wrought havoc with missions in the past. Timothy Richard believed that China could be converted in a generation if only the benefits of western Christian culture could be imported to the Chinese people. In acting on this principle he did virtually the same thing that was taking place anyway by the general impact of Europe and America on China. The result was that in the eyes of the Chinese there was little if any difference between the Christianity he represented and the western civilization that was breaking down the traditional Chinese culture.

The Gospel is not an institution, it is not a culture, it is not a civilization. It is not a pattern of social action — it

s a message. When this message is faithfully and relevantly proclaimed it will lead, under God's blessing, to conversion and to the organization of the converts into churches. Such organization, the report states, should take place at the earliest possible opportunity. These churches should be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. The missionary becomes friend, a guide — not a master. He has no lordship over the faith of the children the Gospel has begotten. The missionary and the sending church must reckon seriously with Pentecost which gives the Holy Spirit to the church wherever it exists, and which makes the youngest of churches fully church, fully the body of Christ its head. This is the biblical basis for the abolition of paternalism in missionary labor.

* * *

THE basis for medical work on the mission field is the law of love. No missionary standing in a context of suffering in which there is no alleviation can preach the goodness and mercy of Christ without manifesting this goodness and mercy in a concrete and immediate way. Calvin said that Christ by his miracles "doth not only declare his power but also his goodness to the end he may allure men unto himself by the sweetness of his grace." Therefore the apostles "used this gift (of healing) inasmuch as it served to further the credit of the Gospel."

This does not commit the missionary church to a general program of social uplift. Some draw this conclusion. They suggest that since Christ helped men on these scores, we can help men on all scores, and thus manifest Christ's concern with suffering humanity. They forget that neither Christ nor the

apostles sponsored programs and organizations that would effect changes in the social structure. Christ was not an educator, philosopher, medical expert, statesman, or economic planner. He was the preacher of a message. This message he implemented, as far as we can tell, in unplanned ways by concrete acts which demonstrated the compassion and love that lay at the heart of his message. This is an altogether different matter than an ecclesiastically sponsored program to transform the culture or economic status of a given pagan society. Transformation of the society will surely take place when the Gospel comes to live in the hearts of the people, but it will in the first place be a response to the Gospel and not a part of the Gospel itself; and, in the second place, the transformation will arise from within the society and not be imposed from without.

* * *

THE synodical adoption of a study committee report will not in itself materially affect the work that is now being done on our several fields. Synodical adoption lays the basis for action, it does not by itself provide the action. Principles in the abstract are fruitless. They must become a vital part of the world of thought and action of those who are engaged in prosecuting the task of missions. They must become a part of the thinking of the church which has been charged to disciple the nations. Ministers, society leaders, Sunday school teachers, should try to penetrate their meaning and significance and transmit these to the missionary church. They must never be allowed to become simply a set of rules for missionaries to live by. Rather, they should motivate and inform the thinking of the entire church. Then

proper missionary action will flow from them as naturally as our Christian education grows out of the covenantal thinking of the Church.

* * *

IT seems wise of Synod to have adopted the reports "in spirit and general content." No human work is infallible and therefore not every expression in these rather extensive reports need be considered binding on the church in the discharge of her missionary labors. An aim, a method, a directive for the conducting of the missionary offensive on two specific and important fronts has been accepted for the thinking and action of the Church, her Board and her missionaries. The question now simply becomes one of appropriating and living by what the church has accepted. When this is done in all earnestness, differences of opinion within the framework of agreement can only lead to better understanding of the basic principles and to a more fruitful discharge of the missionary task.

It is well to note, however, that although Synod endorsed the reports "in spirit and general content" it did not take exception to any statement made or to any position taken in them. It endorsed the whole as it stands but did not wish to bind the church to any particular verbatim statement. The important element in the synodical adoption of the reports on Evangelism and Medical work is therefore the adoption of the several principles enunciated. By these, however they may be worded, the Church would have the missionary community live. They are scripturally grounded and have had fruitful results in their application in many important mission areas.

Sectarianism in Harlem

By EUGENE S. CALLENDER*

THE most phenomenal gains in church membership during the past 25 years were made by those groups called sects. These groups of religious

zealots provide an interesting study of one phase of religious life in the United States. No one will deny that the principles of religious freedom, untrammelled access to and the right of individual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and the privilege of worship according to the individual conscience, which have found their fullest expression in America, have given rise to a

multiplicity of religious sects in this country.

Every sectarian group in this country has a following in Harlem. The most popular and perhaps the largest group is that sect led by Father Divine. However, because of a series of lawsuits, Father has fled New York and now there is a great battle among the cult leaders for the throne vacated by

* Mr. Callender has been carrying on follow-up work for the Back To God Hour among the Negroes in Harlem, New York City. Mr. Callender was recently declared candidate for the ministry by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, and will soon be ordained as the first Negro minister in that denomination.

Sectarianism in Harlem — Continued

Divine. Although none of these fanatical prophets has so far inherited the notoriety of Father Divine, their tug of war for spiritual control of the largest Negro community in the country deserves attention for two reasons. First, these groups may be classified as extreme fundamentalists and they portray to us the inadequacy of the fundamentalist theology. Secondly, their growing popularity reflects poignantly certain social and economic ills which beset Negroes everywhere. It would of course be easy to fall into the stereotype which neatly catalogues all Negroes as carefree and happy-go-lucky people who have a natural bent for savage rituals reminiscent of the jungle; it is more difficult to analyze the nature of their escape mechanisms and determine to what extent white people are to blame for the conditions which foster their existence.

The Inadequate Message

THE cultists recognize the value of an emotional appeal and employ the most exotic symbols and panoply to hypnotize new converts away from the established church. This emotional appeal is tied in with their fervent super-naturalism and other-worldliness which has all but departed from the more orthodox denominations in Harlem. The chief doctrine of these cults is the second coming of Christ to establish his millennial reign. They are profoundly pessimistic. Society has been morally deteriorating since the days of Adam and the downward trend must continue until Christ comes to set things right by a cosmic catastrophe. One finds little or no social consciousness among these sects. They feel that it is no part of the church's duty to be concerned about the social order. This world is not their home. This other-worldliness is especially pronounced in sectarian hymnology; the gospel hymns and choruses abound in references to heaven and the second coming of the Lord. The people in Harlem who have sought the spiritual refuge of the small sects, like their fore-parents in slavery, sing of the life beyond the grave because life in Harlem is hardly worth living.

Another characteristic of the sectarian message is Perfectionism. This teaching is based on a false notion of sanctification. They teach that sancti-

fication is achieved by an experience subsequent to regeneration and when it is achieved the saint is perfect. The experience is secured in only one way, namely, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, manifested in the believer by a definite emotional reaction. Sometimes these emotional spasms run into strange channels, including trances, speaking in unknown tongues, prophecy and gifts. This perfectionism lends itself to the other-worldliness of the cult. For there is uniform opposition to worldliness in all its forms. Specifically they deny the use of tobacco and intoxicating beverages, such amusements as dancing, theatre-going, wearing cosmetics and reading novels. In typical fashion these sects elevate the necessities of their own existence into moral virtues and decry as sinful the manner of life they cannot pursue.

This other-worldliness and the perfectionistic message of the cult does not meet the spiritual and material needs of Harlem's masses. It only provides an escape from the grim reality of life in Harlem. The Harlem resident needs the whole counsel of God, with its message of sovereign grace and its implication for all of life. He must be told that the Kingship of Christ is a present reality, not something away off in the future. On the basis of the present Kingship of Christ we must become concerned about the economic and social tyrannies that enslave the Harlem resident. It is because Christ is King that He alone can redeem Harlem's sinful society for us and through us, by casting out the demons of prejudice, lust, greed, avarice, and fear, and destroying the hideous and filthy slums.

The Cult as an Opiate for the Social Ills

WHY do the cults attract so many followers in Harlem? There are at least four reasons that can be given:

1. The cults furnish an escape from economic hardships. White people have made Harlem the servant quarters of the great estate that is New York City. True, the Negro has on the whole received better treatment in New York than in any other part of the country. But, this circumstance has tended to obscure the ugly fact that Harlem is essentially a black ghetto, created and perpetuated not only by successive migrations of Negroes from the South,

where economic segregation is taken for granted, but, by the ignorance, fear, prejudice, indifference, exploitation and benevolence of New York's white majority. It is the white segregation policy which is responsible for the housing situation, in which thousands of Negroes are squeezed into vermin-ridden cold water flats, and white avarice which is to blame for the exorbitant rents they charge.

2. The cults raise the social status of their followers. Unable to give recognition in a white dominated world, the cults create a world of their own, in which the leader is a paragon of prestige.

3. The cults supply an impression of universality, a feeling of belonging to a larger group. Speeches over the radio, the circulation of a national newspaper, and the impression that their leader wields political power all strengthen the disciples' notion that they have found a method of combating social and economic ostracism.

4. The cults provide a meaning for existence. Frustrated and puzzled, the disciples find in their leaders' simplified sermons a significance to their squalor. Indeed, the search for the solution to the meaning of life often leads them from one cult to the other: and that is why the cults seem populated by so many joiners who have failed to find sufficient emotional release in other orthodox movements.

* * *

THE cult is the refuge of the poor. Here we meet the disinherited, the dispossessed, and those whom Thurman calls, "men with their backs against the wall." These people are not only poor materially, but, they are the religiously neglected poor. More and more the average Protestant church is becoming a middle class institution. They are neglecting the so-called down-and-outers. The cults welcome them. The pre-millennialistic message of the cult is essentially a defense mechanism for these disinherited, who despair of obtaining substantial blessings through the social process. Therefore they turn on the world which has withheld its benefits, and look to its destruction in a cosmic cataclysm which will exalt them and cast down the rich and powerful.

The guile and showmanship of the cult leaders are largely responsible for luring these poor people to the use of escape mechanisms. The cult leaders

know all the devices for manipulating the emotions of people and they use them to prey on the emotional insecurity of the Harlemites. They know that the impoverished of Harlem need a social outlet badly. They capitalize on the Negro's need of being considered important, the need of being accepted, of giving vent to pent-up emotions. It is in the guidance of their cults' operations that the prophets fail to measure up. In a negative sense, they even harm their disciples. One prominent minister suggested to me that these cults should be banned. But such a thing would not be tolerated in a democracy which promises freedom of religion, no matter how unorthodox the religion may be. Besides, banning the sects would not solve the deeper issues involved. The cults themselves are not a community illness; they are merely symptoms which indicate the presence of a growing disease. The sects in

Harlem could well receive their death blow when the white man does his share in relieving the Negro's economic and social frustrations.

* * *

FOR us it is very much in point to ask: What is the Church's duty in the face of the situation I have described above? I think at least two things may be said in reply.

For one thing, the Church ought not to lend support and comfort to the continued existence of such economic and social inequalities and injustices. The Church has done that only too often in the past, and especially with reference to the Negro — appealing often, unfortunately, to supposedly Scriptural teachings concerning the divinely sanctioned inequality of the races. Here, as everywhere, the Church must not fail to witness to the Biblical teaching con-

cerning justice and love in social relations, in the spirit of the prophets, and no less in the spirit of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul.

But more important, we must be concerned to bring to those who follow the panaceas of "escape religions" the full counsel of the Word of God, and that divine truth which touches man's relation to this world as well as to the world to come. This, we believe, is best set forth in our Reformed heritage. The Harlemites need for his living here and now, as well as for his living hereafter, what all other men need — the saving truth of God. There is no real freedom from human ills in the strange teachings of the cults. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is our duty, in obedience to the Lord who spoke these words, to go and "teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

Dear Sirs:

Just wanted to let you know about my latest change in address, and I hope my last one as long as I am in Korea. From here on, please address your magazine to:

Charles Blondino HN
799 49 62
7th M. T. Bn., 1st Div.
c/o FPO, San Francisco, Cal.

I must say that I certainly am enjoying your magazine, and especially Mr. Daane's articles on "What Are The Last Things?" Please notify me when my subscription is nearing its end, since I do not want to miss a single copy.

Thank you very much.

In HIS precious name,
Charles Blondino

* * *

Dear Sirs:

The Reformed Journal, Volume II No. 6 was given me by a subscriber, a friend of mine. You will understand, that, as a Christian laborleader for many years, the article of Mr. George Stob on "The Church and the Labor Problem," attracted my attention.

Now, it is not my intention to criticize or comment on overtures of classes or decisions of synods of the Christian Reformed Church. But since Mr. George Stob declares that "too many of us are too little informed on tech-

nical aspects of labor procedures" (were it only on technical aspects!) and as it is quite clear that there is much confusion and even ignorance on the labor question, please allow me to give some comment on the article. In a certain sense Mr. Stob himself asks for it when he states that he or others want an "explication of 'the principle underlying the Christian Labor Movement'" to make it clear what a certain classis means. Therefore some comment may be welcome.

1) *What is a Christian labor movement?*

It is an organization of workers, who believe that God has created a good world: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." But, as the third chapter of Genesis reveals, sin of men destroyed everything, not only private life but the life of the community as well. Therefore those workers believe that they have not only to fight sin in their own life but also in all the realms of life.

They believe that God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to restore and renew what has been destroyed by sin and in this faith they are desirous to follow the Master, who says. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

That is the basis of the work of a Christian labor movement. It knows that in social-economic life sin has penetrated to such an extent that it would be hopeless to fight it, if it were not in the joyful certainty that Jesus Christ is Victor. Even though selfishness has been made the leading principle of social-economic life, the Christian labor movement desires to adhere to the great commandment in the law and to make love the law of life.

Standing in the midst of social-economic life the Christian labor movement feel it their duty to fight sin and to try to bring about a better, a more Christian society, which is more in conformity with the biblical standards than the present one.

2) *What is a "neutral" union?*

It is a union, which says that religion, that the Bible, that Jesus Christ has nothing to do with labor questions. A "neutral" union wishes to improve labor conditions. It does not see that "the ax is laid unto the root of the trees" of this society. It says that society is good, and that the union only has to try to get a larger portion of the cake for the workers they represent. They are probably not more selfish than the men of the Christian Labor Movement, but they accept the social economic system as it is, trying to get out of it as much as they can and having no criticism of a fundamental nature.

Letters to the Journal — Continued

A "neutral" union is basically materialistic. It teaches their members to be materialistic. It could not do otherwise and some of their leaders frankly confess that the "neutral" union is materialistic in principle. It prepares the soil and it prepares the soul of the worker for materialistic systems and with all their fight against communists in their ranks their very union is a breeding-ground for them. And, what is apparent already now, is that the workers who come under their influence are gradually being loosened from the church.

3) *What is a "closed" or a "union shop"?*

The closed shop has been outlawed by the Taft-Hartley Act, but the union shop, which is being applied on a large scale, is in principle not different.

These are "union-security" systems, which are based on the idea that the one union is the enemy of the other union. If by a majority vote the one union is the bargaining agent for a plant, the workers in that plant or company have to join that union, whether they like it or not, whether they have objections or not, whether their conscience forbid it or not, under the penalty of losing their job.

This idea in its rigid application is related to the totalitarian idea of the unity of the working class and the philosophy of the class struggle. The aim is to build up a power of the working class to defeat the employers. The "neutral" union argues that every worker can join, irrespective of creed or religion, which, of course, on the clear arguments as stated above, is being denied by Christian workers.

Now the faith of the Christian worker is being tempted by the union-security clauses, which say: join the union or you get no bread.

This is a repetition of the temptation of Satan, saying to Jesus: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Jesus answered: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word, that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

God or bread.

That is the deepest meaning of present-day application of union-security clauses. And the thousands of Christian workers have already bent for God Mammon. To work under a union security clause means high wages and a short working week. But a refusal to

yield to this violation of the freedom of organization means either unemployment or a lower standard of living.

In their struggle against communism the Indonesian government has prohibited, one of these days, the union security clause in collective agreements, as being a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, a point of view, which may teach many Christians among us and open their eyes for the consequences of these systems.

4) *"Let the Church be the Church"*

This phrase at the end of the article of Mr. Stob is one of the very few, which I can endorse.

But what does it mean?

In this connection allow me to refer to the last chapter of the book "Het Christelijk leven in de Maatschappij" (Dr. G. Brillenburg Wurth, Prof. of the Theological School in Kampen, Holland), and especially to the last chapter entitled: "De Kerk en het leven der maatschappij," of which, in concluding, I would only quote the following (page 294):

"It (the Church, F.) has to speak holy-unprejudiced as the prophets of Israel did, who neither did spare anybody and irrespective of persons only bore witness: 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

But at the same time it has to speak holy-concrete. It is neither going to draft social-economic programs nor to frame projects for a perfect society. But when it speaks, in its preaching, its catechism class, its care for the soul, nobody should [or] justly can reproach it, that it stammers vague commonness. It will not leave anything untried to learn to know today's real life of society in its oppressive problematic and to obtain a sharp understanding of what is exactly at stake in the social economic struggle of our days" (Translation F.)

In closing this letter I beg to inform you, that I am sending a copy of it to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, now in session and to the headquarters of the C.L.A. of the U.S.A.

Yours in the same faith,

F. P. Fuykschot,
General Secretary, International Federation of Workmen's Evangelical Associations.

Dear Mr. Editor:

Please allow me to comment, as briefly as possible, on the article of Prof. George Stob in the June, 1952, issue of your paper, under the heading "The Church and the Labor Problem."

I shall not answer all the arguments and questions of Mr. Stob. I wish to deal especially with the position of the Christian Reformed Church, which I claim, Mr. Stob has not properly presented. In his comment on the overture of Classis Minnesota and its position, he states, "Classis Minnesota is, of course, mistaken in its interpretation of 'decisions of past Synods' and offers no Scriptural support for its own thesis. Synod has, quite contrary to what Classis Minnesota claims, explicitly affirmed that membership in a "neutral" organization is compatible with Church membership, and that the contrary judgment 'would amount to dangerous separatism, which is condemned by Scripture' (Acts 1946, pp. 103, 104)."

The writer of this letter is a member of the Committee which reported to the Synod of 1946, and upon whose recommendation the decisions from which Mr. Stob quotes one incomplete sentence were taken. That Committee, appointed in 1945, had the mandate to give an interpretation of the decision of the Synod of 1945 reading as follows: "Church membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible as long as such union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin."

The entire report of that Committee is found in the same Acts of 1946, pp. 265-267, and ought to be read to appreciate the full meaning of the advice given by the committee. Allow me to quote just this: "Synod did *not* say: *that church membership is compatible with membership in unions which reject Christ and cast aside the fundamental principles of justice contained in His Word.*"

Now for the sake of clarity and truth, allow me to quote the decisions of the Synod of 1946 in this matter, upon recommendation of its committee of pre-advice, which literally took over the recommendations of the Study Committee, as follows:

"A. Synod declare that the position adopted by the Synod of 1943 and by previous Synods; namely, that 'church membership and membership in so-called neutral labor unions are com-

patible' is based upon the following grounds:

1. Becoming a member of such a so-called neutral labor union does not as such constitute a sinful act, inasmuch as according to Synod's circumscription such unions as here meant give no constitutional warrant to sin, and do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God.

2. It follows that becoming a member of a so-called neutral union, as thus described, does not constitute a censurable act.

3. To adopt the principle, making it applicable to every case, that church membership is incompatible with membership in labor unions which give no constitutional warrant to sin, and which do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God would amount to dangerous separatism, which is condemned by Scripture, John 17:15, I Cor. 5:9-11. See explanation of these passages in the Agenda of 1926, pp. 116-117.

B. With respect to membership in organizations (in any sphere, including labor) which *do* give constitutional warrant to sin and/or show in their regular activities that they do champion sin, Synod call the attention of the Church to the Report on Corporate Responsibility, whose conclusions were adopted by the Synod of 1945, and which gives adequate advice to consistory and classes with respect to this matter. . .

C. Whereas it is undeniable that many organizations in whatever sphere (whether labor, business, or professional) have assumed or tend to assume a character which excludes them from the class of so-called neutral unions, as circumscribed by the Synod of 1943, and places them in a class of organizations against which the Synod of 1945 has issued a warning; and whereas membership in such worldly unions or organizations entails moral and spiritual danger, Synod repeat the exhortation given in the Conclusion of the Report on Corporate Responsibility and adopted by the Synod of 1945; namely, that wherever feasible our people 'establish and promote definitely Christian organizations in the social sphere.'"

Thus far the quotation. Now, Mr. Editor, I ask you, what right did Mr. Stob have to write as he did, as I quoted

from his article above, leaving the heart of the decision — namely the qualifications for approved neutral organizations — out of his quotation, and using only the very last clause of the decision of Synod in that paragraph and making it apply to all neutral unions, without circumscription? By so doing he is making Synod say something which it very definitely did not want to say at all. Such a presentation of Synodical decisions is misrepresentation.

And, with that disapproval of the correctness of the position which he has presented as the position of the Church, his entire argumentation falls. For, it is not true that the question at issue is a quarrel between two labor organizations both of which are "blessed" by the Church, unless of course, Mr. Stob can prove that the A.F.L. is a neutral labor organization that meets the conditions set forth by the Church before membership in it can be declared to be compatible with membership in the Church. The very fact that the A.F.L. has no respect for religious convictions already condemns it, which is only one of many unchristian activities of which that organization is guilty.

One comment also I would like to make in connection with Mr. Stob's reasoning about conscience. "There is a tendency here to identify the laboring man's conscience with the Church's conscience. In doing so the Church is in danger of identifying her conscience with the conscience of one member over against the conscience of another." I shall not enter into a discussion about conscience, although it is generally understood among Reformed scholars that conscience can never be the guide in any critical decision. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God."

Neither can I understand how it is possible for the Church to have a conscience that might be different from that of its members — who also might come to different conclusions on the same question — when all are bound by the same Word of God. This idea of letting conscience be one's guide is dangerous business, unless absolute subjection to the word of God is stressed.

And, Mr. Stob evidently in that matter, too, overlooked what the Synod of 1943 said. I quote: "Christian conscience cannot condone membership in a neutral organization if it continues and approves its sinful practices in

spite of protests against them."

There is much more to be said, but I do not want to misuse the privilege of giving expression to my disagreement. Thank you, so much, for placing this letter.

Joseph Gritter, Secretary,
Christian Labor Association,
Grand Rapids, Michigan

* * *

DEAR SIRs:

When Calvin College and Seminary had its great expansion drive a few years ago the motto for this drive was "Forward in Faith." I believe it is reasonable to apply this motto not only to the ideals lying behind the expansion of our higher educational facilities, but also to the act of erecting the material buildings. This applies also to any other denominational building done by the Church or our people. This extension of ideals lies at the root of the Synodical overtures which Prof. G. Stob discusses in his article in the June issue of the *Reformed Journal*.

Besides this general point there are a few specific points in Prof. Stob's article which may be debated. First for the specific points:

1. Prof. Stob makes much of the issue "Let the Church be the Church." All through the discussion he falls back on this contention. But the fact is that in dealing with Calvin College and liberal arts education the Church is acting expediently and not strictly as a Church. It seems quite unfair, therefore, when under attack to hide behind the nature of the Church, when the Church is acting expediently of its own initiative. When in the market place, rightly or wrongly has been discussed elsewhere, the Church should be willing to abide by the rules of the market place.

2. Prof. Stob writes further: "And it (The Board of Trustees) simply awarded the contract to the lowest bidding contractor." It is about time that we recognize the matter to be not simple but extremely complex.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution our fathers, from whom we have received our heritage, have lived in an economic environment where the "lowest cost" concept was a basic principle. This principle was never seriously questioned in our tradition, since to do so would have been to question the whole economic structure. But where our fathers accepted the "cost" principle as axiomatic it was challenged by the Socialists and is being attacked by all

Letters to the Journal — Continued

those who advocate some form of Welfare State. In order for our witness to be effective it has become imperative that we define our terms in context with present thought. For some leading questions we may ask: Is this concept Universal, i.e., does it apply equally to purely economic activities as to such activities as building churches, a religious activity, schools, religio-educational, charity etc.? Is this principle possibly limited by such Christian principles as good workmanship, being my brother's keeper, devotion to God and the Universe we control under Him?

3. On the practical side Prof. Stob asks "Is it realistic to suppose that a Church can operate with her own 'labor clause' . . . in our present economy?" The question would seem to be not so much whether a Church can, but whether she should. If she should then she can find a way, the same as the Federal Government has found ways.

4. There are other points which can not all be mentioned here, e.g., a reference to "all our denominational building projects." Synod only has to set a precedent in matters which affect it as Synod. Or again — "a Church can keep complete control of her building projects" with the following argument that a Church cannot keep "complete" control. This does not warrant that a Church should throw up its hands and abandon all and any control.

* * *

Returning to the general point mentioned in the first paragraph of this letter, I wish to say only a few words, since a letter to the editors is not adequate to go far into this complete problem. The principle involved here is the difference between a Christian economic life and a non-Christian economic life; specifically, whether building a certain building to be used by a Christian institution is a Christian ac-

tivity in itself. To me the reason Solomon and not David was allowed to build the temple has relevance to our problem. The cathedral builders of the Middle Ages give us an example. The Calvinistic principle that all we do shall be done to the glory of God at the least leaves room for the question how a non-Christian bricklayer using dedicated funds to a dedicated purpose can do a dedicated job.

To me this is the question the overtures to Synod attempt to bring out. I hope sincerely that Synod will take up the challenge to study this much neglected sphere. That the sphere of economic life has been so long and pointedly neglected by us cannot be entirely blamed on our painful lack of competent scholars qualified to deal with these problems. It is time that we examine ourselves and see whether we possibly are guilty of hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt.

Paul C. Van Lonkhuyzen
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Heart of the Matter

By GEORGE STOE

THE basic question in connection with the proposed adoption of a Synodical "labor policy" for the awarding of denominational building contracts, is the question concerning the propriety of a Christian's membership in a so-called "neutral" labor union. To put it concretely: May a Christian working-man hold membership in the AFL or CIO? Or, is it incumbent upon the Christian working-man, if he is to remain a church member in good standing, to be either non-union or a member of the CLA?

Our own Church has answered the question by declaring that "church membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible," and by declaring that the contrary judgment "would amount to dangerous separatism, which is condemned by Scripture" (Acts 1946, pp. 103, 104).

* * *

Mr. Joseph Gritter, Secretary of the CLA, feels that in thus representing the position of a past Synod I have misrepresented the stand of our Church. His editorial in the July issue of the *Christian Labor Herald* puts it even more strongly. Mr. Gritter

asserts that I "deliberately distort the truth," and that "in trying desperately to bolster a position that is untenable" I "resort to misrepresentation." Why does he lay me under such heavy guilt? Because I did not explicitly state that by "neutral" unions Synod means: "labor unions which give no constitutional warrant to sin and which do not show in their regular activities that they champion sin or that they are in conflict with the universal principles of justice contained in the Word of God."

To be sure, I could easily have added that qualification. But it didn't even remotely occur to me that it was necessary. Our Synods have repeatedly so defined "neutral" unions, and the definition has become as current among us as the word itself. And I simply assumed, quite without any intention to "distort the truth" — I'm sure Mr. Gritter will believe me — that we all thought of a "neutral" union in the sense defined by Synod.

In any event, I am sure that this makes little difference for the concrete question at issue. The real question in connection with labor affiliation is not how to define the word "neutral." The real question is: Which are the "so-

called neutral labor unions" that Synod had in mind when it said that membership in them is compatible with church-membership? The answer is perfectly clear. Synod had in mind such "so-called neutral labor unions" as the AFL and CIO.

This is very clear because it was in answer to a specific request that Synod condemn membership in the AFL and CIO that the Synod of 1943 answered: "Church membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible as long as such union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin" (Acts 1943, p. 102, cf. pp. 396-400). By this Synod plainly meant that it is not mandatory that a Christian workingman shall become a member of a Christian Labor organization. He may, without prejudice to his church membership, be a member of a non-Christian, i.e., a "so-called neutral" labor union. However, if such a "so-called neutral" labor union shows itself in its constitution and in its regular activities to be not merely "non-Christian" but deliberately "anti-Christian," it is expected that he will

resign his membership in that union. In other words, Synod declared that a church member may be a member in existing labor unions other than the CLA. Which are these other existing labor unions? They are, of course, the AFL and CIO. And it is a matter of simple fact that our Church knowingly embraces in her membership and in her consistories members of the AFL and CIO, without prejudice to their status as church-members or office-bearers. And while the Church warns them that if these unions are or become anti-Christian they must resign their membership in those unions, the Church has never been willing to declare membership in these unions condemnable. In fact, Synod has more than once refused to so declare when requested to do so.

* * *

Now, Mr. Gritter holds that the AFL and CIO are unions which stand condemned by God's Word, and that membership in them on the part of a church member should be condemned to the point of ecclesiastical censure. Mr. Gritter further holds that every Christian workingman should be a member of the CLA. He has a right to these judgments, and I honor them as his sincere convictions, for the sake of which he has given a considerable measure of his life and energy.

But it must be understood that the Church has never been willing to take either stand along with Mr. Gritter. In 1930 Synod rejected a request to commit itself on the character of the AFL (Acts 1930, p. 74). Mr. Gritter himself put before the Synod of 1940 a two-fold request on this score. For one thing, he declared; "It is our contention that these unions have long ago lost their so-called 'neutral' character," and he therefore asked the Synod of 1940 for a definite statement condemning membership in the AFL and CIO (Acts 1940, p. 334-338).

The Synod of 1943, to which this request finally came for answer, refused to so declare, and instead adopted a statement concerning the compatibility of church membership with membership in "so-called neutral labor unions" (Acts 1943, p. 102). In offering this advice, the Study Committee observed: "Our Synods in the past wisely refrained from naming particular organizations and from putting them, as such under the ban of the church, partly because of the difficulty involved in passing an intelligent and true judg-

ment . . . but especially because such a procedure is not in harmony with Reformed Church Government." And in support of this latter statement the Committee cited a number of respected Reformed authorities on Church Polity (Acts 1943, p. 397).

Mr. Gritter also urged an expression by Synod to the effect that every Christian workingman should be a member of the CLA (Acts 1940, p. 338). The Synod of 1943, when put before this request, refused to give such an expression. To the contrary, it declared that "Church membership and membership in a so-called neutral labor union are compatible as long as such union gives no constitutional warrant to sins, nor shows in its regular activities that it champions sin" (Acts 1943, p. 102).

The fact is, therefore, that our Church has never condemned membership in any of the existing "so-called neutral" labor unions. Members of these existing labor unions (AFL and CIO) reside in our membership and officiate in our consistories without prejudice. The Church does exhort each of her members, whether belonging to a labor union or to any other social or economic organization, to be "fully persuaded in his own mind," and to conduct himself in his associations as "unto the Lord." And insofar as they do, and until the contrary appears, the Church regards them as Christians and her own dear children.

On the Church's own position, therefore, our Synod may not adopt a "labor policy" by which she enters into the labor arena to take party with one of her members over against another. But even more fundamentally, the Church may not do so because she is a Church; and while it is her duty to set forth the principles for Christian living in every area, and to give counsel and guidance to every Christian, she may not depart from her calling and become an active party to concrete labor differences. The Church must remain the Church. And she must remain the Church to all her members.

* * *

IF we are to get all the way to the heart of the matter, we ought to recognize and fully confess that there is not in our present world such a thing as a "neutral" labor union. Our own Synods have sensed that, and for that reason repeatedly speak of "*so-called* neutral labor unions" (My italics - S). Though they are *so called*, they are *not* "neutral."

Mr. Gritter said to the Synod of 1940 that the AFL and CIO "have long ago lost their 'neutral' character." I think it is more correct to say that they never were "neutral." In fact there is nothing "neutral" about any of the social organizations in our world. The American Medical Association is not "neutral." The Manufacturers' Association is not "neutral." The Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs are not "neutral." The Republican Party, the Democratic Party, and Citizens' Action of Grand Rapids are not "neutral." But many Christians, including many of our own church members, are active members of these non-neutral organizations, and they are that without prejudice and even with credit.

If we are precise in our concepts and definitions — and we should be — we will recognize that Jesus has not given to His followers a "neutral" place in which to stand. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

In every area and activity in our present society, therefore, we are driven to the choice of for Christ or against Him. No part of our living in this present world provides us an easy refuge. We are everywhere caught up in the most basic and elemental conflict. History moves in terms of God's decree: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed." And the Christian may not live anywhere in our present society except in terms of this God-initiated and God-ordained antithesis.

The peril to our faith and loyalty is the possible assumption that we can be neutral in this non-neutral world. But the fact is that if we, as Christians, attempt to be neutral, we make a sinful choice — a choice *for* the world, and *against* our Christ. "He that is not with me is against me." The Christian knows no neutrality. He lives always and everywhere in terms of the antithesis.

* * *

Now there is some difference of judgment as to how we must live out the principle of the antithesis. The basic Scriptural teaching seems to be that we should do so by faithful Christian witness and conduct in the midst of the world into which our creaturely duty calls us. It is thus that we live in the world as "the salt of the earth," enjoined not to become unsavory, and as "the light of the world," warned

The Heart of the Matter — Continued

against putting the candle "under a bushel."

There are some who think that we can live out the principle of the antithesis only by physical separation — by the setting up of Christian organizations within our corrupt society. It is judged by some that we must do so in the sphere of labor. The principle may be a correct one. It is conceivable that some of the organizations in our present society should become so corrupt and positively anti-Christian that in the spirit of final judgment the Christian must wholly withdraw the salt and light of his presence and leave such organizations to doom.

But we have not yet been driven to such a judgment concerning existing labor organizations. It has not yet

been successfully demonstrated, nor has the Church been compelled to declare, that a Christian's membership in existing labor unions is intolerable, and that he must give up the endeavor to Christian life and witness in them and live out the antithesis in terms of physical separation.

It is hard to see how in the complexity of this problem we can do anything other than to exhort every man to "be fully persuaded in his own mind." And our Synods have done no more. If there are Christians who are certain that they must affiliate with a Christian labor organization, let the Church bless and teach and encourage them as they are so persuaded. If there are other Christians who, either of necessity with

conviction, or of conviction apart from necessity, believe that they may as well must affiliate with other existing labor unions, let the Church bless and teach and encourage them as they are persuaded.

But whatever the choice, we must never forget the calling to conflict. God has set us, all and each, at enmity with this world. It is no light thing that it is perhaps impossible and improper — for us to try to force the conscience of a brother in a matter so complex as that of his labor affiliation. It is a lighter thing, and by God's grace it is as fully possible as it is proper, to exhort and encourage each other to live as those who are Christ's in that world in which we are severally called, and therefore to live in terms of the antithesis which He set between His own and the world.

The Art of the Novel and Christian Faith

To promote and foster the art of fiction writing which aims to depict the Christian faith as it may be dramatized in human life, the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company takes pleasure in announcing its second Biennial Fiction Award of \$5,000. Stories may be set in any period or locale, and may concern any area of life. Entries must demonstrate craftsmanship and imaginativeness in both style and plot, and must portray a Christianity that is both convincing and realistic. The cash award of \$5,000 will be paid in full to the author of the manuscript considered best by the committee of judges; half of the award will be an outright cash prize, and half will be an advance of royalties on a first edition of 10,000 copies. Subsequent editions will yield the customary author's royalties.

Argye M. Briggs, winner of the last Fiction Award, received the main selection of the Peoples Book Club with her award book, *Root Out of Dry Ground*, which is now in a Grosset and Dunlap reprint edition. With her second novel, *This, My Brother*, Mrs. Briggs repeated the Peoples Book Club selection, and last October her recent story, *The Hem of His Garment*, was the main selection of *Christian Herald's*

Family Bookshelf. To date, with the author receiving wide acclaim and her books translated into many foreign editions, including British, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Portuguese, there are now approximately a half-million of her books in print.

The publishers consider this a remarkable affirmation of their purpose to foster the art of the novel which presupposes the Christian faith, and believe that in their contest, a good and winning book will produce a novel both widely read and acclaimed. They invite you to enter your manuscript in the competition, which closes September 1, 1953.

Contest Rules

1. The contest encourages writing which aims to depict the Christian faith as it may be dramatized in human life.
2. All citizens of the United States and Canada are eligible to enter.
3. Only unpublished work is eligible for the contest.
4. A cash award of \$5,000 will be paid the author of the entry considered best by the committee of judges: half of the award will be an outright cash prize; half will be an advance of royalties on a first edition of 10,000 copies.

Subsequent editions will yield the customary author's royalties. Any manuscripts of merit not receiving the award will be considered for publication at regular royalty rates. The publishers reserve the right to withhold the prize of \$5,000 should the entries prove of sufficient caliber to justify the award.

5. Manuscripts should be roughed between 70,000 and 100,000 words in length. However, no rigid limits as to maximum will be imposed.

6. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double spaced on 8½" x 11" paper. Author should retain carbon copy and submit original. Every precaution will be taken for safety of manuscripts, but the publishers do not assume responsibility in case of loss or damage. Manuscripts will be returned after the contest.

7. Author's name and address, with title of the manuscript, should be placed in a sealed envelope and enclosed with manuscript.

8. Contest closes September 1, 1953. Manuscripts must be postmarked later than midnight, September 1, 1953.

9. Manuscripts should be addressed to: Fiction Award Editor, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 200 Jefferson Ave., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. It is recommended that Registered Express, Insured, be used for sending manuscripts, and they will be returned by this same means promptly after the contest closes.